

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the present application.

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS:

1-5. (Canceled).

6. (Currently Amended) A process for the continuous recovery of free tartaric acid from raw materials containing at least 5.0 wt % potassium hydrogentartrate in dry matter comprising mixing the raw materials with water and dissolving potassium hydrogentartrate to form a suspension of potassium hydrogentartrate, decanting the suspension to obtain a clarified liquid, subjecting the clarified liquid to a microfiltration to form a microfiltration filtrate, vacuum cooling the microfiltration filtrate to crystallization temperature to form potassium hydrogentartrate crystals, centrifuging the potassium hydrogentartrate crystals, dissolving the potassium hydrogentartrate crystals in water, removing the potassium from the aqueous potassium hydrogentartrate solution by ion exchange, and forming tartaric acid crystals by evaporating the tartaric acid solution.

7. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 6, wherein the raw material is wine yeast, tartar, or a byproduct material obtained during wine preparation.

8. (Previously Presented) The process of claim 6, wherein the filtrate obtained by a microfiltration of aqueous tartar solution is added to the filtrate provided for the cooling crystallization.

9. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in any of the claims 6 to 8, wherein the liquid obtained during decanting is at least partly recirculated to the process.

10. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in any of the claims 6 to 8, wherein the liquid obtained during the microfiltration is at least partly recirculated to the process.

11. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in any of the claims 6 to 8, wherein the liquid obtained during the cooling crystallization is at least partly recirculated to the process.

12. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in any of the claims 6 to 8, wherein the liquids obtained during decanting, microfiltration, and cooling crystallization are at least partly recirculated to the process.

13. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in any of the claims 6 to 8, wherein the liquid obtained during decanting is at least partly recirculated to the process and wherein the liquid is recirculated to the suspension containing solids and potassium hydrogentartrate dissolved in water.

14. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in any of the claims 6 to 8, wherein the liquid obtained during the microfiltration is at least partly recirculated to the process and wherein the liquid is recirculated to the suspension containing solids and potassium hydrogentartrate dissolved in water.

15. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in any of the claims 6 to 8, wherein the liquid obtained during the cooling crystallization is at least partly recirculated to the process and wherein the liquid is recirculated to the suspension containing solids and potassium hydrogentartrate dissolved in water.

16. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in any of the claims 6 to 8, wherein the liquids obtained during decanting, microfiltration, and cooling crystallization are at least partly recirculated to the process and wherein the liquid is recirculated to the suspension containing solids and potassium hydrogentartrate dissolved in water.

17. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in any of claims 6 to 8, wherein the cooling crystallization is performed at a temperature of 5 to 15° C and under a vacuum of 0.007 to 0.015 bar.

18. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for the continuous recovery of free tartaric acid from raw materials containing at least 5.0 wt % potassium hydrogentartrate in dry matter comprising a stirred heatable tank for mixing the raw

materials with water and dissolving potassium hydrogentartrate to form a suspension of potassium hydrogentartrate, a decanter for decanting the suspension to obtain a clarified liquid, a microfilter for subjecting the clarified liquid to a microfiltration to form a microfiltration filtrate, a cooling crystallizer for vacuum cooling the microfiltration filtrate to crystallization temperature to form potassium hydrogentartrate crystals, a centrifuge for centrifuging the potassium hydrogentartrate crystals, a heated tank for dissolving the potassium hydrogentartrate crystals in water, a cation exchanger for removing the potassium from the aqueous potassium hydrogentartrate solution by ion exchange, and an evaporator for forming tartaric acid crystals by evaporating the tartaric acid solution.

19. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the raw material is wine yeast, tartar, or a byproduct material obtained during wine preparation.

20. (Canceled)

21. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of any of claims 18 to 19 wherein the decanter has a screw or screen discharge.

22. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of any of claims 18 to 19 wherein the microfilter is ceramic and has a pore size of 0.05 to 0.6 μm .